

84. The emphasis of patriotism and independence through a political and religious lens: A new historical reading of the selected national anthems

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Abstract

This paper fundamentally delves into how patriotism and independence are emphasised in the selected national anthems through a political and religious lens in the light of the New Historicism. In this regard, four national anthems from the Western and Eastern countries acknowledged to have assumed the role of the coloniser or colonised in recorded history are selected for the analysis in this study: The United Kingdom's *God Save the Queen*, France's *The Song of Marseille*, Chad's *The Song of Chad*, and Nigeria's *Arise, O Compatriots*. This paper, therefore, addresses how national anthems share a significant political as well as religious role to influence and even shape their history by activating their societies' love for their own countries and hunger for independence. Accordingly, the Introduction of this paper gives a general outline of the perspectives towards the national anthems and the New Historicism. This study, furthermore, provides the reflections of these perspectives on the British, French, Chadian, and Nigerian national anthems by displaying the dynamic interplay between the national anthems and the history itself thanks to the application of the New Historicism. In Conclusion, this paper reveals not only the similarities but also the differences of the selected national anthems with respect to their emphasis of patriotism and independence through a political and religious lens, alongside the New Historicist approach.

Keywords: National Anthems, Patriotism, Independence, Politics, Religion

Vatanseverlik ve bağımsızlığın siyasi ve dini açıdan vurgulanması: Seçilmiş ulusal marşların yeni tarihselci bir okuması

Öz

Bu makale esas olarak; Yeni Tarihselcilik ışığında, seçilen ulusal marşlarda vatanseverlik ve bağımsızlığın siyasi ve dini bir bakış açısıyla nasıl vurgulandığını incelemektedir. Bu bağlamda bu çalışmada, tarih kayıtlarında sömürgeci veya sömürülen rolünü üstlendikleri kabul edilen Batı ve Doğu ülkelerinden dört ulusal marş analiz için seçilmiştir: Birleşik Krallık'ın *God Save the Queen*, Fransa'nın *The Song of Marseille*, Çad'ın *The Song of Chad* ve Nijerya'nın *Arise, O Compatriots*. Bu makale, dolayısıyla, ulusal marşların kendi ülkelerine duyulan sevgiyi ve bağımsızlık isteğini harekete geçirerek tarihlerini etkileme ve hatta şekillendirme amacıyla önemli bir siyasi ve dini rolü paylaştığını ele almaktadır. Bu doğrultuda, bu makalenin Giriş bölümü, ulusal marşlara ve Yeni Tarihselciliğe yönelik bakış açılarının genel bir taslağını vermektedir. Bu çalışma ayrıca, Yeni Tarihselcilik yaklaşımının uygulanması sayesinde ulusal marşlar ile tarih arasındaki dinamik etkileşimi göstererek; bu bakış açılarının İngiliz, Fransız, Çad ve Nijerya ulusal marşlarına yansımalarını sunmaktadır. Sonuç olarak bu makale; seçilen ulusal marşların vatanseverlik ve

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bağımsızlığa vurgusuna ilişkin sadece benzerliklerini değil aynı zamanda farklılıklarını da siyasi ve dini bir bakış açısıyla ve Yeni Tarihselci yaklaşımla ortaya koymaktadır.

Anahtar kelimeler: Ulusal Marşlar, Vatanseverlik, Bağımsızlık, Politika, Din

Introduction

National anthems as poems that are accompanied by music have been masterfully used to instil strong feelings of patriotism and independence into their societies by the countries and the political leaders, which enables and ensures these societies' unity and solidarity. Accordingly, Karen Cerulo (1989) identifies in her *An Empirical Analysis of National Anthems* that the political leaders who have faith in the power of the national symbols including anthems, flags and currencies utilise these national symbols "to direct public attention, integrate citizens, and motivate public action" (p. 77). Such national symbols mirror "the nation's identity or character, its mood, desires, and goals" (Cerulo, 1989, pp. 78-79) determined by the rulers in power, and anthems appear to be nations' calling cards that convey thoughts, messages, and emotions by achieving these leaders' political goals. In this regard, national anthems have been prominent political symbols that reflect societies' national identities as well as their patriotism, independence, unity, and sovereignty throughout history. Similarly, religious symbols are widely demonstrated in national anthems owing to the power of religion to unify people to fight against their enemies for the purpose of protecting their own nations, countries and leaders. These political and religious symbols which are consciously and frequently utilised in national anthems are so powerful to influence and manipulate societies that almost all countries possess their own national anthems which are often performed on particularly formal occasions.

Some of the most common central themes are apparently the glorification of God and the war, the prayers for the salvation of the country, and the call for the army and freedom, alongside the love for the country, the nation, and the leader, such as the king and the queen. The lyrics and the music of the national anthems were chosen by their writers and composers so carefully in accordance with their purpose that they have been easily transmitted to the new generations who can also feel and keep the real spirit of their national anthems alive by examining their history closely as their ancestors did before. In addition, as Cerulo (1993) utters in her *National Anthems and Flags*, nations' leaders select the most suitable, effective, and appealing national anthems as their national symbols for "the state of their target audience, the national population" as they are acutely aware that "national symbols are so important to the political modernization process" (p. 250). The collective and common perspective as presented by their national anthems that nations possess through a political and religious lens enables and ensures their unity, patriotism, independence, and sovereignty for centuries. Moreover, national anthems provide their nations with the national spirit and strength to fight for their eternal existence as liberated societies sacrificing their lives for the sake of their countries if required.

Regarding the historical events at the time when national anthems were written, not only does the history – that is, wars, politics or religion – shape the national anthems but they also shape the history, which continues to carry on their duties to unify their nations in modern world. Hence the application of the New Historicism to the British, French, Chadian, and Nigerian national anthems will most likely shed light on their political and religious purpose and impact through their analysis in this paper. Stephen Greenblatt (1989) as a pioneer in the New Historicism in the 1970s addresses in his *Towards a Poetics of Culture* that "the work of art is itself the product of a set of manipulations (...) the product of a negotiation between a creator or class or creators, equipped with a complex, communally shared

repertoire of conventions, and the institutions and practices of society” (p. 12). In other words, literature and history which are ideologically affected and manipulated by the political or religious institutions and conventions possess a dynamic relationship by influencing and shaping one another. In this respect, Jan Veenstra (1995) asserts in his *The New Historicism of Stephen Greenblatt* that the ideas of Michel Foucault as initially expounding “the strategies and operations of power in discourse” were useful to Greenblatt significantly in his interpretations of the texts from the New Historical viewpoint by constantly departing from or arriving “at a totality of power” (p. 182). From this perspective, it can be stressed that both literature and history are the ideological, social, political or religious manifestations, expressions, and reflections of the behaviour of the societies and the institutions, which also leads the historical texts to turn into the examples of the literary texts.

The literary work and the historical circumstances are mutually important to each other in accordance with the New Historicist approach, as stated by Lois Tyson in his *Critical Theory Today* as follows:

[T]he literary text and the historical situation from which it emerged are equally important because text (the literary work) and context (the historical conditions that produced it) are mutually constitutive: they create each other. Like the dynamic interplay between individual identity and society, literary texts shape and are shaped by their historical contexts. (2006, pp. 291-292)

Hans Bertens additionally points out in his *Literary Theory: The Basics* that according to the New Historicists, “literature is not simply a product of history, it also actively *makes* history” with the aim of tracing and displaying the cultural, ideological, and power relations – that is to say, literature serves common purposes with the political, religious, and historical texts as well as the “products of marginal subcultures” (2002, p. 177). In actuality, the New Historicists do not deny the reality of the history but reevaluate and rethink on the literary texts by means of the historical facts or circumstances when they were written by analysing, interpreting, exploring, and reflecting the ideologies, power relations, religious, social or political discourses and perspectives. Accordingly, this study primarily aims to explore, analyse, and interpret the emphasis of patriotism and independence in the United Kingdom’s *God Save the Queen*, France’s *The Song of Marseille*, Chad’s *The Song of Chad*, and Nigeria’s *Arise, O Compatriots* through a political and religious lens from the viewpoint of the New Historicism.

A New Historical Reading of Britain, France, Chad, and Nigeria’s National Anthems

The United Kingdom’s national anthem, *God Save the Queen*, was most probably written by Henry Carey “sometime between 1736 and 1740 but was first heard in public at a dinner in 1740 to celebrate the taking of Portobello by Admiral Vernon” even though it is possible to see similar versions of *God Save the Queen* with the name of *God Save the King* as illustrated by Xing Hang in his *Encyclopaedia of National Anthems* (2003, p. 652). On the other hand, according to Alex Marshall (2015), the British national anthem was written at the request of George II, who was the king of Britain between 1726 and 1760, since there was “a crisis: the old Catholic royal family were trying to reclaim the throne”, and he had faith in a song, *God Save the King*, which enabled him to win the war thanks to its spread throughout the country (pp. 10-11). Despite the fact that *God Save the Queen* has never been officially announced as the national anthem of the United Kingdom, it has always been sung traditionally in the United Kingdom as the national anthem, and it also considerably influenced and inspired many other countries such as Denmark, Russia and Sweden (Hang, 2003, p. 652). In terms of its strong influence on its people and other countries, the British national anthem like all the similar versions in its history achieved to unify its people and encourage them to fight for their king or queen.

God Save the Queen mainly aims to activate British society's love for their kingdom that symbolizes their own country nationally even today as follows: "God save our gracious queen, / Long live our noble queen" (2003, p. 653). The preceding lines are revealed to pray to God for the United Kingdom's queen to live and rule the country for a long time praising her as "noble" and "gracious". The following lines in the second stanza also emphasise patriotism and independence praying to God to 'scatter' the queen's enemies and to defeat their politics as well as tricks through a political and religious lens:

O Lord our God arise,
Scatter her enemies
And make them fall;
Confound their politics,
Frustrate their knavish tricks. (p. 653)

The preceding lines present that the British national anthem motivated and gave confidence to its people and soldiers at the time when they were written and sung. Considering its influence on British society, there is a dynamic interplay between *God Save the Queen* as a national anthem and British history – that is, they both affected and shaped each other. Even today, it can be assumed that *God Save the Queen* is a political and religious national symbol that highlights the loyalty towards their kingdom and country as well as the patriotism and independence unifying British society.

On the other hand, France's national anthem, *La Marseillaise* "*The Song of Marseille*", was penned by Joseph Rouget de Lisle in honour of the officers who took part "in France's campaign against Austria" in 1792 to end the anxieties and worries of the nation and the soldiers by supporting and encouraging the revolution (Hang, 2003, p. 237). At that time, the French Revolution was on the agenda, which ultimately dismissed its king, Louis XVI, who was so horrified by the war that he tried to escape from the country the year before, and so whose powers were harshly limited, but also the French feared the invasion of "Austria and the Prussian Empire" (Marshall, 2015, p. 19). Thus, about 600 hundred men marched to Paris to death for twenty-eight days beginning from *Marseillaise* singing their national anthem whose initial name was *The War Song of the Rhine Army* by making these men legends of France (Marshall, 2015, pp. 18-19) and making this song France's national anthem.

Through a political lens, the French national anthem in parallel with the British, Chadian, and Nigerian national anthems serves the very important purpose of unifying their army and society by instilling strong feelings of patriotism and independence into them. As Hang (2003) utters, *The Song of Marseille* as the French national anthem "aroused great enthusiasm among the soldiers and the public" (p. 237). In the following lines of *The Song of Marseille*, French soldiers are called to fight against their enemies who are portrayed as dangerous, violent, and frightening as well as slaughters:

Oh, do you hear there in our fields
The roar of these ferocious soldiers?
Who came right here in our midst
To slaughter our sons and wives. (2003, p. 238)

Nevertheless, as a German poet states, the French national anthem "was responsible for the death of 50,000 of his countrymen", and many French people hate their anthem due to its violent and vicious call to the army and the war (Marshall, 2015, p. 18). In this respect, not only did French war history shape *The Song of Marseille* but this national anthem also changed the course of French history with

the emphasis of its patriotism and independence. The French national anthem, moreover, enabled a considerable number of men to sacrifice their lives for the sake of their own country and nation. Seemingly, this national anthem is a kind of horrifying invitation to the French army in which French soldiers are encouraged to murder all their enemies who are revealed to possess ‘impure blood’, and sacrifice their lives: “To arms, oh citizens // March on, march on! / May their impure blood / Flow in our fields!” (p. 238). Hence it appears that all the people who are different from their own blood are wished to be slaughtered, which would probably cause this anthem to encompass a racist tone. Regarding the following lines of the last stanza as follows: “Sacred love of country, // May your dying enemies / See your triumph and our glory!” (p. 238), France’s *The Song of Marseille* keeps its ‘divine’ objective to unite its people against its enemies or invaders thanks to its emphasis of “sacred” patriotism and independence not only through a political but also a religious lens.

With the purpose of celebrating their “independence from French colonial rule”, *La Tchadienne* “*The Song of Chad*” as Chad’s national anthem was written by Louis Gidroi and a student group in 1960 (Hang, 2003, p. 123). According to Chad Country Review (2015), “the French first penetrated Chad in 1891” (p. 7) and established their authority and army chiefly against the kingdoms of Muslims. Thereupon, Chad became independent under its first president, Francois Tombalbaye, in 1960 subsequent to living for long years under the shadow of French imperialism. Accordingly, Francis Onditi (2018) asserts in his *African National Anthems* that national anthems globally illustrate a nation’s identity and unity, but in Africa, “they assert a country’s independence from colonial imperialism” (p. 3). Apparently, owing to this prevailing colonial imperialism as well as political and economic instability, Chad had great difficulty uniting its people who came from different ethnicities, religions, and languages even after this country declared its independence.

Chad Country Review, on the other hand, points out that Chad is one of the least developed and the poorest countries in the world today in spite of its rich natural resources in gold, uranium and oil (2015, p. 1). In this regard, *The Song of Chad* basically aims to celebrate its independence from the colonial imperialists, activate their patriotic feelings, and unite its people. Chad’s national anthem, furthermore, strives to give its people hope and courage to resist the imperialist pressures and maintain their freedom and independence, as provided by the first stanza as follows:

People of Chad, arise and take up the task!
 You have conquered the soil and won your rights;
 Your freedom will be born of your courage.
 Lift up your eyes, the future is yours. (2003, p. 123)

Likewise, the second stanza of Chad’s national anthem tries to instil its people hope to live in a peaceful, joyful, and advanced country thanks to God, which also makes this stanza as a kind of prayer for the welfare and prosperity of the country as follows: “Oh, my Country, may God protect you, // Joyful, peaceful, advance as you sing, / Faithful to your fathers who are watching you” (pp. 123-124). In a nutshell, Chad’s declaration of independence from French imperialism strongly affected *The Song of Chad*, and this national anthem also seems to have politically and religiously impacted their history as well by trying to maintain the emphasis of hope and courage in addition to their patriotism and independence. Even if Chad is unable to succeed in becoming one of the richest and most developed countries today, it can be stressed that the Chadian nation has done their best to keep their national culture and history alive, particularly by linking them to their ancestors who did not give up fighting against all the colonial powers and died for the sake of their independence and sovereignty.

In parallel with the Chadian national anthem, *Nigeria We Hail Thee* as Nigeria's former national anthem was "adopted at independence in 1960" but replaced in 1978 by *Arise, O Compatriots* whose "music was composed by Benedict Elide Odiase, director of music of the Nigerian Police Band" (Hang, 2003, p. 472). In terms of Nigeria's success to gain independence from the British Empire, Edward Weaver (1961) elucidates in his *What Nigerian Independence Means* that Nigeria was assumed to be "the biggest free black nation in the world" (p. 146) at that time. In this respect, the Nigerian people collectively and separately fought Britain to allow "their native freedoms, customs, rituals, and the like" (Weaver, 1961, pp. 147-149) to survive, together with their numerous diverse tribes, different cultures, languages, and religious groups as well as non-Africans. On the other hand, their diversity is most likely to unite them rather than to tear them apart, and they appear to become determined to keep their patriotism and independence alive with the aid of the Nigerian national anthem.

Considering the first stanza of Nigeria's national anthem, *Arise, O Compatriots*, it can be emphasised that the Nigerian political leaders request every person regardless of their language, religion or ethnicity to serve their common purpose to protect their freedom and power as follows:

Arise, O compatriots.
Nigeria's call obey
To serve our fatherland
With love and strength and faith. (2003, p. 472).

In accordance with the preceding lines, Weaver (1961) also addresses, "in Nigeria each region, each group, is dependent upon the other", which encourages their sharing and cooperation within "village-family-kindred relations" (p. 149). Likewise, the last stanza of Nigeria's national anthem reveals how their nation feels the necessity for God's guidance to preserve their unity, peace, patriotism, and independence as follows: "O God of creation, / Direct our noble cause; // To build a nation where peace and justice reign" (p. 472). Accordingly, the grim reality of British imperialism influenced Nigeria's *Arise, O Compatriots*, which also seemingly shaped Nigerian history by uniting them and instilling patriotism and independence into their diverse nation through a political and religious lens.

Conclusion

National anthems as the national symbols and identities of the nations and the countries worldwide play crucial roles for their societies to instil patriotic feelings and hope into them by enabling and ensuring their unity, sovereignty, and independence through political and religious viewpoints. Hence the main purpose of the national anthems has been to enable enough power and motivation for the soldiers as well as the societies to fight for their country and rulers against the enemies and invaders. Therefore, this paper displays that there has been a dynamic interplay between the national anthems and the history itself – in other words, they influenced and shaped each other in the course of history. Even today, national anthems indisputably continue keeping their goal alive by transmitting their culture and history to new generations, establishing a close connection with their ancestors, and maintaining the real spirit of their national anthems. In this regard, the United Kingdom's *God Save the Queen*, France's *The Song of Marseille*, Chad's *The Song of Chad*, and Nigeria's *Arise, O Compatriots* share the common purposes of national anthems of unifying and motivating their people as well as giving them hope and power to fight for their countries and rulers against their enemies.

The selected national anthems of this study similarly put a political and religious emphasis on intense feelings of patriotism and independence although there is much more political emphasis on France's *The Song of Marseille*, whereas there is much more religious emphasis on the United Kingdom's *God Save the Queen*. Despite the wide diversity of these nations' victories, defeats, political systems, economic conditions or religious beliefs, the roles and aims of their national anthems are very similar to each other, while their ways to influence their nations in their national anthems may change depending on being a coloniser or colonised in recorded history. In this respect, this paper shows that four of these national anthems as the historical manifestations and the literary texts that mirror their nations' identities and convey their thoughts undeniably stress patriotism and independence by calling their soldiers to the war, giving their societies hope for freedom, praying to God or praising the rulers through a political and religious lens in accordance with the perspective of the New Historicism.

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